



U.S. DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE

USDA News - Lone Star State Edition - April 28, 2022

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From the FSA State Executive Director

FSA is accepting applications for the [Spot Market Hog Pandemic Program](#) from December 15, 2021, through April 29, 2022. FSA extended the deadline which was previously set to end on April 15, 2022. USDA will make payments to hog producers who sold hogs through a spot market from April 16, 2020, through Sept. 1, 2020, the period in which these producers faced the greatest reduction in market prices because of COVID-19.

[Grassland CRP](#) signup is continuing until May 13. Grassland CRP helps producers and landowners protect grassland while enabling haying or grazing activities to continue. Lands enrolled support haying and grazing operations and promote plant and animal biodiversity.

Additionally, signup for [Clean Lakes, Estuaries, And Rivers \(CLEAR30\)](#) will run from April 1, 2022, through Aug. 5, 2022. CLEAR30 provides an opportunity for producers to receive incentives for a 30-year commitment to water quality practices on their CRP land, building on their original 10- to 15-year CRP contracts.

Signup for assistance for eligible 2022 drought losses on grazing lands through the Livestock Forage Disaster Assistance Program opened on Apr. 11. A map and list of eligible counties and pasture losses for LFP drought may be found on the FSA website at: [Livestock Forage Disaster Program \(usda.gov\)](https://www.fsa.usda.gov/programs-and-services/livestock-forage-disaster-assistance-program). This database is updated, weekly, on Thursdays following posting of the U.S. Drought Monitor.

Be sure to check with your [local FSA office](#) for additional information on these and other programs that may be available.

Sincerely,

Eddie Trevino
Acting State Executive Director
Farm Service Agency - Texas

From the NRCS State Conservationist

Spring has sprung in Texas! Bluebonnets are in full bloom, summer crops are sprouting, and the trees are budding bright green leaves. This is a busy time of year for agricultural producers across the state, as well as NRCS.

April 14, 2022, marked the 87th anniversary of Black Sunday, a day when a great dust storm began in the drought ravaged Great Plains and rolled eastward showing the environmental, social, and economic devastation affecting the region. Just a couple of weeks later, on April 27, 1935, Congress passed the Soil Conservation Act, which established the Soil Conservation Service as an agency under the U.S. Department of Agriculture. Hugh Hammond Bennett, NRCS's first chief was instrumental in getting this act passed. So many things have changed with the agency since then, but what has remained is NRCS's steadfast commitment to help each private land steward with every acre of their land helping to protect our nation's food security.

There are several voluntary conservation program application periods open that will close on **April 29th**.

- [National Water Quality Initiative](#) for landowners in Burnet, Collin, Fannin, Grayson, Hunt, and Lampasas to install conservation practices that promote soil health, reduce erosion, and lessen nutrient runoff, such as filter strips, cover crops, reduced tillage, and grazing management to improve water quality in two high-priority watersheds.
- [Longleaf Pine Initiative](#) for landowners in Anderson, Angelina, Chambers, Cherokee, Hardin, Houston, Jasper, Jefferson, Liberty, Montgomery, Nacogdoches, Newton, Orange, Polk, Sabine, San Augustine, San Jacinto, Shelby, Trinity, Tyler, and Walker to sustain, enhance and restore longleaf pine forests on agricultural land, nonindustrial private forest, and Tribal land.
- Financial assistance is being offered through the Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP) to African American forest landowners in east Texas to implement conservation practices that can help increase the land's value and improve its forest and wildlife habitats as part of the Sustainable Forest and African American Land Retention Program (SFLR). [SFLR-EQIP](#) is available to producers working with Prairie View A&M University in the following east Texas counties: Anderson, Angelina,

Bowie, Camp, Cass, Chambers, Cherokee, Franklin, Freestone, Galveston, Gregg, Grimes, Hardin, Harris, Harrison, Henderson, Houston, Jasper, Jefferson, Leon, Liberty, Madison, Marion, Montgomery, Morris, Nacogdoches, Newton, Orange, Panola, Polk, Red River, Rusk, Sabine, San Augustine, San Jacinto, Shelby, Smith, Titus, Trinity, Tyler, Upshur, Van Zandt, Walker, Waller and Wood.

Wildfire Recovery and Restoration - The application period for financial assistance for those producers impacted by the recent wildfires closes on **July 5, 2022**. Conservation practices such as grazing deferment, reseeding and water development that are effective post-fire strategies to help reduce erosion. As of April 17th, counties eligible for this opportunity include Andrews, Aransas, Archer, Bee, Bell, Blanco, Borden, Bosque, Brewster, Brooks, Brown, Cameron, Coke, Coleman, Comanche, Concho, Cooke, Crane, Crockett, Culberson, Dawson, Dimmit, Duval, Eastland, Ector, Edwards, Erath, Gaines, Garza, Grayson, Hemphill, Hidalgo, Hood, Howard, Hudspeth, Jeff Davis, Jim Hogg, Jim Wells, Kenedy, Kimble, Kleberg, Live Oak, Martin, Mason, Maverick, McCulloch, Medina, Menard, Midland, Nueces, Palo Pinto, Parker, Pecos, Potter, Presidio, Randall, Reagan, Real, Refugio, Roberts, Runnels, Starr, Terrell, Tom Green, Upton, Wichita, Willacy, Williamson, Winkler, Wise, Zapata, and Zavala.

Please contact your local NRCS office for more information or to apply for these programs.

NRCS celebrated our Earth Team Volunteers during National Volunteer Week from April 17th - 24th. This year's theme was "*Shining a Light on USDA Volunteers.*" Volunteers have provided a valued source of talent and enthusiasm to NRCS across the state. Their work allows us to stretch available resources and put more conservation practices on the ground. If you or anyone you know are interested in volunteering with NRCS, please contact your local NRCS office.

We are joining the Texas State Soil and Water Conservation Board, Texas Soil and Water Conservation Districts and other partners to celebrate Soil and Water Stewardship Week from April 24 through May 1, 2022. The focus this year is "Healthy Soil, Healthy Life." Healthy soil gives us life through providing clean air and water, ample crops and forests, productive grazing lands, diverse wildlife, and beautiful landscapes. Hugh Hammond Bennett knew this to be true many years ago when he stated, "Out of the long list of nature's gifts to man, none is perhaps so utterly essential to human life as soil."

Upcoming events:

Local Work Group meetings are still taking place across the state. This is a great opportunity to have a voice in prioritizing natural resource concerns in your local area. The locally led process of conservation is the foundation of NRCS's conservation program delivery process. A complete list of Local Work Group meetings, times and locations for each county can be found via a statewide map on the **NRCS Texas website**.

Texas Riparian & Stream Ecosystem Training – Upper San Antonio River Watershed – May 5, 2022

Women in Agriculture Workshop – Wharton County – May 7, 2022

Sustainable Forestry & African American Land Retention Workshop – May 12, 2022

USDA to Provide Payments to Livestock Producers Impacted by Drought or Wildfire

The U.S Department of Agriculture (USDA) announced that ranchers who have approved applications through the 2021 Livestock Forage Disaster Program (LFP) for forage losses due to severe drought or wildfire in 2021 will soon begin receiving emergency relief payments for increases in supplemental feed costs in 2021 through the Farm Service Agency's (FSA) new [Emergency Livestock Relief Program \(ELRP\)](#).

Background

On September 30, 2021, President Biden signed into law the *Extending Government Funding and Delivering Emergency Assistance Act* (P.L. 117-43). This Act includes \$10 billion in assistance to agricultural producers impacted by wildfires, droughts, hurricanes, winter storms and other eligible disasters experienced during calendar years 2020 and 2021. Additionally, the Act specifically targets \$750 million to provide assistance to livestock producers for losses incurred due to drought or wildfires in calendar year 2021. ELRP is part of FSA's implementation of the Act.

For impacted producers, USDA will leverage LFP data to deliver immediate relief for increases in supplemental feed costs in 2021. LFP is an important tool that provides up to 60% of the estimated replacement feed cost when an eligible drought adversely impacts grazing lands or 50% of the monthly feed cost for the number of days the producer is prohibited from grazing the managed rangeland because of a qualifying wildfire.

FSA received more than 100,000 applications totaling nearly \$670 million in payments to livestock producers under LFP for the 2021 program year.

Congress recognized requests for assistance beyond this existing program and provided specific funding for disaster-impacted livestock producers in 2021.

ELRP Eligibility – Phase One

To be eligible for an ELRP payment under phase one of program delivery, livestock producers must have suffered grazing losses in a county rated by the U.S. Drought Monitor as having a D2 (severe drought) for eight consecutive weeks or a D3 (extreme drought) or higher level of drought intensity during the 2021 calendar year, and have applied and been approved for 2021 LFP. Additionally, producers whose permitted grazing on federally managed lands was disallowed due to wildfire are also eligible for ELRP payments, if they applied and were approved for 2021 LFP.

As part of FSA's efforts to streamline and simplify the delivery of ELRP phase one benefits, producers are not required to submit an application for payment; however, they must have the following forms on file with FSA within a subsequently announced deadline as determined by the Deputy Administrator for Farm Programs:

- CCC-853, *Livestock Forage Disaster Program Application*

- Form AD-2047, *Customer Data Worksheet*.
- Form CCC-902, *Farm Operating Plan* for an individual or legal entity.
- Form CCC-901, *Member Information for Legal Entities* (if applicable).
- Form FSA-510, *Request for an Exception to the \$125,000 Payment Limitation for Certain Programs* (if applicable).
- Form CCC-860, *Socially Disadvantaged, Limited Resource, Beginning and Veteran Farmer or Rancher Certification*, if applicable, for the 2021 program year.
- A highly erodible land conservation (sometimes referred to as HELC) and wetland conservation certification (Form AD-1026 *Highly Erodible Land Conservation (HELIC) and Wetland Conservation (WC) Certification*) for the ELRP producer and applicable affiliates.

ELRP Payment Calculation – Phase One

To further expedite payments to eligible livestock producers, determine eligibility, and calculate an ELRP phase one payment, FSA will utilize livestock inventories and drought-affected forage acreage or restricted animal units and grazing days due to wildfire already reported by the producer when they submitted a 2021 CCC-853, *Livestock Forage Disaster Program Application* form.

Phase one ELRP payments will be equal to the eligible livestock producer's gross 2021 LFP calculated payment multiplied by a payment percentage, to reach a reasonable approximation of increased supplemental feed costs for eligible livestock producers in 2021.

The ELRP payment percentage will be 90% for historically underserved producers, including beginning, limited resource, and veteran farmers and ranchers, and 75% for all other producers. These payments will be subject to a payment limitation.

To qualify for the higher payment percentage, eligible producers must have a CCC-860, *Socially Disadvantaged, Limited Resource, Beginning and Veteran Farmer or Rancher Certification*, form on file with FSA for the 2021 program year.

Payments to eligible producers through phase one of ELRP are estimated to total more than \$577 million.

ELRP - Phase Two

Today's announcement is only Phase One of relief for livestock producers. FSA continues to evaluate and identify impacts of 2021 drought and wildfire on livestock producers to ensure equitable and inclusive distribution of much-needed emergency relief program benefits.

Emergency Relief Program (ERP) Assistance for Crop Producers

FSA is developing a two-phased process to provide assistance to diversified, row crop and specialty crop operations that were impacted by an eligible natural disaster event in calendar years 2020 or 2021.

This program will provide assistance to crop producers and will follow a two-phased process similar to that of the livestock assistance with implementation of the first phase in the coming

weeks. Phase one of the crop assistance program delivery will leverage existing [Federal Crop Insurance](#) or [Noninsured Crop Disaster Assistance Program](#) data as the basis for calculating initial payments.

Making the initial payments using existing safety net and risk management data will both speed implementation and further encourage participation in these permanent programs, including the Pasture, Rangeland, Forage Rainfall Index Crop Insurance Program, as Congress intended.

The second phase of the crop program will be intended to fill additional assistance gaps and cover eligible producers who did not participate in existing risk management programs.

Through proactive communication and outreach, USDA will keep producers and stakeholders informed as ERP implementation details are made available.

Additional Livestock Drought Assistance

Due to the persistent drought conditions in the Great Plains and West, FSA will be offering additional relief through the [Emergency Assistance for Livestock, Honeybees and Farm-raised Fish Program \(ELAP\)](#) to help ranchers cover above normal costs of hauling livestock to forage. This policy enhancement complements previously announced ELAP compensation for hauling feed to livestock. Soon after FSA announced the assistance for hauling feed to livestock, stakeholders were quick to point out that producers also were hauling the livestock to the feed source as well and encouraged this additional flexibility.

It is important to note that, unlike ELRP emergency relief benefits which are only applicable for eligible losses incurred in the 2021 calendar year, this ELAP livestock and feed hauling compensation will not only be retroactive for 2021 but will also be available for losses in 2022 and subsequent years.

To calculate ELAP program benefits, an [online tool](#) is currently available to help producers document and estimate payments to cover feed transportation cost increases caused by drought and will soon be updated to assist producers with calculations associated with drought related costs incurred for hauling livestock to forage.

More Information

Additional USDA disaster assistance information can be found on [farmers.gov](#), including USDA resources specifically for producer impacted by [drought](#) and [wildfire](#) and the [Disaster Assistance Discovery Tool](#), [Disaster-at-a-Glance fact sheet](#), and [Farm Loan Discovery Tool](#). For FSA and Natural Resources Conservation Service programs, producers should contact their local [USDA Service Center](#). For assistance with a crop insurance claim, producers and landowners should contact their [crop insurance agent](#).

2022 Avian Influenza in the United States - What you need to know!

To date, USDA's National Veterinary Services Laboratories has confirmed the presence of Highly Pathogenic Avian Influenza (HPAI) in commercial and backyard flocks in several states

including Texas. Avian influenza viruses are classified as either “low pathogenic (LPAI)” or “highly pathogenic (HPAI)” based on their genetic features and the severity of the disease they cause in poultry. Caused by an influenza type A virus, HPAI can infect poultry (such as chickens, turkeys, pheasants, quail, domestic ducks, geese, and guinea fowl) and wild birds (especially waterfowl).

The clinical signs of birds affected with all forms of Avian Influenza may show one or more of the following:

- Sudden death without clinical signs
- Decreased water consumption up to 72 hours before other clinical signs
- Lack of energy and appetite
- Decreased egg production
- Soft-shelled or misshapen eggs
- Swelling of the head, eyelids, comb, wattles, and hocks
- Purple discoloration of the wattles, combs, and legs
- Nasal discharge
- Coughing, sneezing
- Lack of coordination
- Diarrhea

In addition to the disease infecting domestic birds, it is important to know that wild birds can also be infected and show no signs of illness. They can carry the disease to new areas when migrating, potentially exposing domestic poultry to the virus. The [APHIS' wild bird surveillance program](#) provides an early warning system for the introduction and distribution of avian influenza viruses of concern in the United States, allowing APHIS and the poultry industry to take timely and rapid action.

With the recent detections of avian influenza in wild birds and domestic poultry in the United States, bird owners should review their biosecurity practices and stay vigilant to protect poultry and pet birds from transmission of this disease. The following bio-safety guidelines are effective methods for safeguarding commercial operations and smaller flocks:

- Backyard flock owners should practice strict biosecurity, including preventing birds from exposure and/or co-mingling with wild birds and other types of poultry.
- Shower, change clothes, and clean and disinfect footwear before entering your poultry housing areas.
- Respiratory protection such as a medical facemask would also be important and remember to always wear clean clothes when encountering healthy domestic birds.
- Carefully follow safe entry and exit procedures into your flock's clean area.
- Reduce the attractiveness for wild birds to stop at your place by cleaning up litter and spilled feed around poultry housing areas.

- If you have free range guinea fowl and waterfowl, consider bringing them into coops or flight pens under nets to prevent interaction of domesticated poultry with wild birds and their droppings.
- It is best to restrict visitors from interacting with your birds currently.
- Do not touch sick or dead wildlife and keep them away from domestic poultry
- Try not to handle sick or deceased domestic birds (if you must, use proper personal protective equipment to minimize direct contact and cautiously disinfect anything that comes into contact with the deceased and or sick bird).

As part of the existing USDA Avian Influenza response plans, Federal and State partners as well as industry are responding quickly and decisively to these outbreaks by following these five basic steps:

- **Quarantine** – restricting movement of poultry and poultry-moving equipment into and out of the control area;
- **Eradicate** – depopulate the affected flock(s);
- **Monitor region** – testing wild and domestic birds in a broad area around the quarantine area;
- **Disinfect** – kills the virus in the affected flock locations; and
- **Test** – confirming that the poultry farm is AI virus-free.

Sick or deceased domestic birds should be reported to your local veterinarian. Positive domestic cases are handled by APHIS and its partners. States that have confirmed cases of Avian Influenza should work closely with USDA-APHIS on surveillance, reporting and control efforts. Disposal methods will be evaluated on a case-by-case basis depending on a variety of factors, including the size of the flock, space requirements, associated costs, local conditions, and applicable laws/regulations.

The United States has the strongest Avian Influenza surveillance program in the world, where we actively look for the disease and provide fair market value compensation to affected producers to encourage reporting.

If you do not raise domestic birds or have a poultry operation but you encounter sick or dead wild birds, please use bio-safety measures, and report your findings through USDA's toll-free number at 1-866-536-7593.

According to the Centers for Disease Control, this strain of Avian Influenza is a low risk to the public. While the transmission rate from animals to humans is low, it is a zoonotic disease, meaning it can be shared between species. To learn more about Avian Influenza and to remain up to date on the latest related news and information, you can visit the [USDAAPHIS webpage](#).

Celebrating National Garden Month with USDA

April is National Garden Month! It's a great time to get outdoors and enjoy the fresh air, sunshine, and beauty of nature while planting and growing your favorite garden varieties.

USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) in Texas is celebrating this special occasion and promoting conservation in your backyard and small acreages with 10 conservation practice tip sheets to help you get started. Read about these [conservation practices](#) farmers and ranchers have been using to conserve natural resources on their farms and ranches for years and apply it to your own piece of Texas.

Let NRCS help you with conservation opportunities and support in your urban farming efforts to achieve local, healthy, sustainable food for your family and community. Texas has conservationists whose work is dedicated to helping those farming in urban areas. They are located in six of Texas's urban areas. Find your [urban conservationist](#).

USDA is committed to understanding, investing in, and supporting the needs of urban agricultural producers. If you are looking for help with your garden and small acreage the NRCS offers technical expertise and financial assistance. NRCS has field offices in Texas serving every county in the state. Start by contacting your local NRCS at the [USDA Service Center](#).

USDA Accepting New or Modified Proposals for the State Acres for Wildlife Enhancement

The U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) is welcoming new and modified proposals from conservation partners for the State Acres for Wildlife Enhancement (SAFE) initiative, a part of the Conservation Reserve Program (CRP) focused on effectively managing wildlife habitat. USDA's Farm Service Agency (FSA) has expanded available practices under this initiative in response to feedback from partners.

Through SAFE, producers and landowners restore vital habitat in alignment with high-priority state wildlife conservation goals. Specifically, landowners establish wetlands, grasses, and trees. These practices are designed to enhance important wildlife populations by creating critical habitat and food sources. They also protect soil and water health by working as a barrier to sediment and nutrient run-off before they reach waterways.

Expanded Practices

To help improve the planning and implementation of the SAFE initiative, FSA is adding two new practices with the assistance of USDA's Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS), FSA's sister agency. In partnership with FSA, NRCS employees across the country provide CRP participants with critical conservation planning assistance, which will now include managing for early successional habitat cover establishment or management, as well as wildlife habitat planting. These additional eligible practices will enable SAFE partners to better target a wide variety of wildlife species, such as the Northern bobwhite, lesser prairie-chicken, and the New England cottontail.

As part of this year's SAFE signup, FSA will also authorize cost-share assistance for producers who would like to re-enroll acres in CRP but need assistance updating their vegetative cover to align with NRCS practice standards for early successional habitat or wildlife planting.

Submitting Proposals

Eligible entities for SAFE include government entities, non-profits, or private organizations.

Additionally, partners with SAFE projects with both General and Continuous CRP practices must submit modified proposals to continue in the program.

New and modified proposals for SAFE projects must be submitted to the FSA State Office in College Station in June. Contact your State Office for the state-specific deadline. More information on developing proposals is available at fsa.usda.gov/crp.

More Information

SAFE is part of the Continuous CRP signup, and producers can begin enrolling in new or updated SAFE programs beginning October 1, 2022. Meanwhile, the Continuous and Grassland signups are currently open, and producers can learn more by contacting their local [USDA Service Center](#). To learn more about SAFE and its benefits, see the initiative's [fact sheet](#).

Signed into law in 1985, CRP is one of the largest voluntary private-lands conservation programs in the United States. It was originally intended to primarily control soil erosion and potentially stabilize commodity prices by taking marginal lands out of production. The program has evolved over the years, providing many conservation and economic benefits.

CRP complements other USDA conservation programs, including several programs offered by NRCS for working lands and conservation easements. Earlier this month, NRCS released its [Northern Bobwhite, Grasslands and Savannas Framework for Conservation Action](#) to help guide voluntary conservation work over the next five years across 25 states, including over 7 million acres of new conservation practices on productive, working lands, and will contribute to the Biden-Harris administration's efforts to make our nation a leader on climate change mitigation, adaptation and resilience. The plan will accelerate voluntary conservation efforts for the Northern bobwhite quail and the grassland and savanna landscapes that the species calls home.

USDA Encourages Producers to Enroll in Grassland CRP

The U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) encourages producers and landowners to enroll in the Grassland Conservation Reserve Program (CRP) starting next week through May 13, 2022. Grassland CRP provides a unique opportunity for farmers, ranchers, and agricultural landowners to keep land in agricultural production and supplement their income while improving their soils and permanent grass cover. The program had its highest enrollment in history in 2021 and is part of the Biden-Harris Administration's broader effort to equip producers with the tools they need to help address climate change and invest in the long-term health of our natural resources.

[Grassland CRP](#) is a federally funded voluntary working lands program. Through the program, USDA's Farm Service Agency (FSA) provides annual rental payments to landowners to maintain and conserve grasslands while allowing producers to graze, hay, and produce seed

on that land. Maintaining the existing permanent cover provides several benefits, including reducing erosion, providing wildlife habitat and migration corridors, and capturing and maintaining carbon in the soil and cover.

FSA provides participants with annual rental payments and cost-share assistance. The annual rental rate varies by county with a national minimum rental rate of \$13 per acre for this signup. Contract duration is 10 or 15 years.

Grassland CRP National Priority Zones

Because Grassland CRP supports not only grazing operations but also biodiversity and conserving environmentally sensitive land such as that prone to wind erosion, FSA created two [National Priority Zones](#) in 2021: the Greater Yellowstone Migration Corridor and Dust Bowl Zone. As part of the Biden-Harris Administration's focus on conservation in important wildlife corridors and key seasonal ranges, for this year's signup, FSA is expanding the Greater Yellowstone Wildlife Migration Corridor Priority Zone to include seven additional counties across Montana, Wyoming, and Utah, to help protect the big-game animal migration corridor associated with Wyoming elk, mule deer, and antelope.

Offers within one of these National Priority Zones will receive an additional 15 ranking points and \$5 per acre if at least 50% of the offer is located in the zone.

Alongside Grassland CRP, producers and landowners can also enroll acres in Continuous CRP under the ongoing sign up, which includes projects available through the Conservation Reserve Enhancement Program (CREP) and State Acres for Wildlife Enhancement (SAFE).

Broadening Reach of Program

As part of the Agency's Justice40 efforts, producers and landowners who are historically underserved, including beginning farmers and military veterans, will receive 10 additional ranking points to enhance their offers.

Additionally, USDA is working to broaden the scope and reach of Grassland CRP by leveraging the [Conservation Reserve Enhancement Program](#) (CREP) to engage historically underserved communities. CREP is a partnership program that enables states, Tribal governments, non-profit, and private entities to partner with FSA to implement CRP practices and address high priority conservation and environmental objectives. Interested entities are encouraged to contact FSA.

More Information on CRP

Landowners and producers interested in Grassland CRP should contact their local [USDA Service Center](#) to learn more or to apply for the program before the May 13 deadline. Additionally, fact sheets and other resources are available at fsa.usda.gov/crp.

Signed into law in 1985, CRP is one of the largest voluntary private-lands conservation programs in the United States. The working lands signup announced today demonstrates how much it has evolved from the original program that was primarily intended to control soil erosion and only had the option to take enrolled land out of production. The program has expanded over the years and now supports a greater variety of conservation and wildlife benefits, along with the associated economic benefits.

Know your Final Planting Dates

All producers are encouraged to contact their local FSA office for more information on the final planting date for specific crops. The final planting dates vary by crop, planting period and county so please contact your local FSA office for a list of county-specific planting deadlines. The timely planting of a crop, by the final planting date, may prevent loss of program benefits.

USDA to Extend Application Deadlines for Partnerships for Climate-Smart Commodities Funding Opportunity

The U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) extended the deadlines to apply for the Partnerships for Climate-Smart Commodities funding opportunity after requests from many stakeholders. The new deadlines to apply via [Grants.gov](https://www.grants.gov) by 11:59 p.m. ET:

- First Funding Pool – May 6, 2022 Proposals from \$5 million to \$100 million
- Second Funding Pool – June 10, 2022 Proposals from \$250,000 to \$4,999,999

The Partnerships for Climate-Smart Commodities funding opportunity will finance pilot projects that create market opportunities for U.S. agricultural and forestry products that use climate-smart production practices and include innovative, cost-effective ways to measure and verify greenhouse gas benefits. USDA began accepting project applications for fiscal year 2022 on Feb. 7, 2022, and since then, Department officials have heard from many stakeholders that an extension would allow them to prepare more robust applications to further development of climate-smart markets for a diverse range of producers. Funding will be provided to partners through the USDA's [Commodity Credit Corporation](#) for pilot projects to provide incentives to producers and landowners to:

- Implement climate-smart production practices, activities, and systems on working lands,
- Measure/quantify, monitor, and verify the carbon and greenhouse gas (GHG) benefits associated with those practices, and
- Develop markets and promote the resulting climate-smart commodities.

How to Apply

A range of public and private entities may apply, including:

- County, city or township governments
- Special district governments
- State governments
- Small businesses
- For profit organizations other than small businesses

- Native American tribal governments (Federally recognized)
- Native American tribal organizations (other than Federally recognized tribal governments)
- Nonprofits having a 501(c)(3) (other than institutions of higher education)
- Nonprofits that do not have a 501(c)(3) (other than institutions of higher education)
- Private institutions of higher education, or
- Public and State-controlled institutions of higher education.

In response to questions received from potential applicants, USDA has also provided additional clarity regarding requirements in the funding opportunity, including:

- The definition of “domestic applicant;”
- Producers’ eligibility as beneficiaries of the funding; and
- Quantification requirements.

[Frequently asked questions](#) are also available on the website to help answer questions.

USDA is committed to equity in program delivery and is specifically seeking proposals from entities serving all types of producers, including small or historically underserved producers. Providing sufficient incentives to encourage producer participation and generating both verifiable greenhouse gas reduction and carbon sequestration benefits are critical to project success and will be considered in the evaluation criteria.

More Information

USDA published a [Request for Information](#) in September 2021 seeking public comment and input on design of this new initiative and used the nearly 400 comments received to inform this funding opportunity. The [funding opportunity has received praise](#) from across multiple industries for its support to create innovative and cost-effective markets.

Visit [usda.gov](https://www.usda.gov) for additional information, including details on Partnerships for Climate-Smart Commodities and resources to support the application.

Ask the Expert: A Farm Operating Loan Q&A with Jack Carlile

In this Ask the Expert, Jack Carlile, Farm Loan Manager for the USDA Farm Service Agency (FSA), answers questions about farm operating loans and when producers should apply in order to secure funds for the current crop year.

As the Farm Loan Manager for the Cherokee County Service Center, Jack is responsible for managing the loan making and loan servicing activities for five counties in northeast Oklahoma. His office provides services for over 650 farm loan customers. Jack was raised on a cross bred cow/calf operation that his grandparents started. Over the years, each generation has added to the operation by purchasing additional pasture. The operation also grows and

bales their own hay. Jack's agriculture background and degree in agriculture economics from Oklahoma State University help him better understand the financing needs of his producers.

Who can apply for FSA Farm Loans?

Anyone can apply for FSA's loan programs. Applications will be considered on basic eligibility requirements. To apply for a loan, you must meet the following general eligibility requirements including:

- Be a U.S. citizen or qualified alien.
- Operator of a family farm or ranch.
- Have a satisfactory credit history.
- Unable to obtain credit elsewhere at reasonable rates and terms to meet actual needs.
- Not be delinquent on any federal debts.

What can I purchase with operating loans?

[Farm Operating Loans](#) are traditionally used for purchasing capital items such as farm machinery, equipment, or livestock. Loan funds can also be used to help pay typical operating expenses for farming and ranching operations. For example, a rancher may use an operating loan to purchase forage for his cattle to feed them through the winter or a row crop producer may use an operating loan for paying for inputs like seed or fertilizer.

What is the maximum loan amount and terms?

The maximum loan amount for a Direct Farm Operating Loan is \$400,000. Direct loans are made and serviced by FSA.

Producers can also apply for [Guaranteed Operating Loans](#) that are made by your commercial lender, and guaranteed against loss by FSA. The maximum loan amount for a Guaranteed Farm Operating Loan is \$1,825,000. Loan terms for operating loans range from one to seven years.

How do I apply?

If you're interested in applying for a farm loan, you can pick up an application by visiting your local FSA office. Visit farmers.gov to find the USDA Service Center nearest you.

When applying for a loan, you will need a business plan, which must include:

- Your mission, vision, and goals for your farm or ranch.
- Your current assets and liabilities.
- Marketing Plan (what your operation will produce and where you will market and sell your products.)
- Whether the amount of income your operation generates will be enough to pay your business and family living expenses.

When should I apply for an operating loan?

I would recommend beginning the application process a few months in advance of needing the funds to allow time for the request to be processed, and for any necessary security checks and searches to be completed. That allows time for the funds to be available for your use when most needed.

Where can I find more information?

To learn more about FSA loans visit farmers.gov/loans or fsa.usda.gov/farmloans. Fact sheets and application packages are also available at your USDA Service Center. To learn more about other types of FSA loans or to find the right loan for your operation, use the Farm Loan Discovery Tool by visiting farmers.gov/loans/farm-loan-discovery-tool.

Save Time – Make an Appointment with FSA

Producers are encouraged to call their local FSA office to schedule an appointment to ensure maximum use of their time and to make sure FSA staff is available to tend to their important business needs. Please call your local FSA office ahead to set an appointment and to discuss any records or documentation that might be needed during your appointment. To find your local FSA office, visit: offices.sc.egov.usda.gov/locator/app

Register for National Small Business Week Summit on May 2-5

Next week is National Small Business Week, and we want to recognize America's farmers and ranchers who are part of the small business community. USDA is partnering with the Small Business Administration (SBA) to hold a virtual summit from May 2-5.

The event will feature access to critical federal resources, educational workshops, and networking to help our Nation's entrepreneurs pivot and grow in the face of challenges, seize new opportunities, and put the dream of starting a small business in reach.

This interactive, online event will help you collect new ideas for your small business. You will also hear practiced advice on current business strategies, meet other business owners, and chat with industry experts.

[Register here.](#)

The logo for USDA in Texas is a dark green rectangular box with the text "USDA in Texas" in white, bold, sans-serif font centered within it.

USDA in Texas



Farm Service Agency

Eddie Trevino
Acting State Executive Director

**Farm Service Agency
State Committee**

Debra Barrett

Natural Resources Conservation Service

Kristy Oates
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